



THE CITY SPREADS OUT By 1873, when this drawing was made, Louisville was spreading to the east and the south.

United States to have underground conduits for telephones.

There were other eventful dates in the history of the period, some of which were all but overlooked at the time. One such date was December 2, 1878, the day the first electric light (an arc) was introduced at Kelly's Ax Factory on Portland Avenue. The electricity for the lights was the outgrowth of experiments conducted by Dr. C. L. Mees, a physics-chemistry professor at Male High School and later president of Rose Polytechnic Institute. With an arc dynamo, he was able to operate sputtering lamps which illuminated the Kelly factory during a time when a large order made it necessary for crews to work at night.

Another important date was November 15, 1881. It was then that the Brush Electric Light Company organized the first plant in the city to produce electricity specifically for lighting. Three small dynamos were installed to generate electricity from steam, and two clothing stores, the Buckingham Theater and the Galt House were provided with a new type of lighting from dusk until midnight.

The following year the United States Electric Light Company was organized, and installed machinery in a building owned by the Louisville Gas Company, the firm which later absorbed it.

The next entrant in the electric lighting field was the Louisville Electric Light Company, which constructed a small plant and started furnishing arc lights before 1883.

After the Southern Exposition buildings and grounds had been lighted successfully by the incandescent lamp recently invented by Thomas A. Edison, who once had worked in Louisville,

the new form of lighting began to grow more in popularity.

Still electricity did not catch on as rapidly as gas lighting had done 50 years before. The wiring was primitive, accidents were common, and the equipment was uncertain, able to provide electricity for only a few hours each night.

The city rejected offers from various of the new companies to light streets by electricity until it was certain the new-fangled style was practical and here to stay. Finally, somewhat grudgingly, in 1884 the city contracted with the Louisville Electric Light Company to light the wharf from First to Fifth Streets.

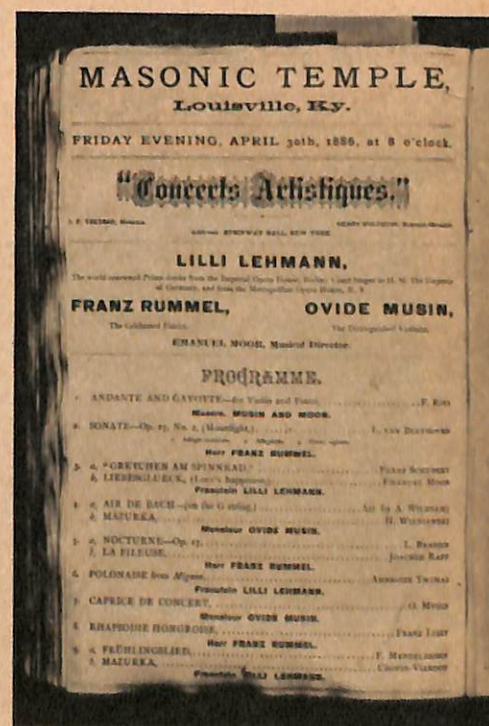
But the beginning in electric lighting had been made and there were those in Louisville who knew it. When the Louisville Gas Company obtained a new charter in 1888, an amendment was secured to grant it authority to manufacture, distribute and sell electricity for illumination.

Moreover, the Louisville Board of Trade in 1888 noted:

"The one thing the city lacks is power. Louisville still is without a steam power hall. . . . A power and land company which would provide power would attract and develop a class of industry which we lack."

The "power hall" to fill that gap would come in the next quarter-century.

For the next quarter-century would see electricity develop to the point that dozens of individual power plants would be set up in the city. Eventually these would be merged into one firm—the Louisville Gas and Electric Company—capable of providing the adequate, cheaper power the growing city would need.



CULTURE TOOK ROOT, TOO

At the same time it was growing industrially, Louisville also was growing in culture, as this concert program from the year 1886 proves most conclusively.